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ABSTRACT

For children to understand history, they need to be able to see the world through the eyes of its participants, and to understand that there are multiple perspectives on the past. This paper focuses on relating theory to practice in history and social studies teaching and curriculum design, emphasizing that historical perspective-taking and empathy are fundamental components of historical understanding. Fostering perspective-taking and empathy in students fulfills another traditional goal of the social studies: education for the social good. The paper synthesizes theory and scholarship from the disciplines of human psychology, history, and education. Drawing from the works of John Dewey, Jean Piaget, and recent scholarship in history education, the study examines the construction of historical understanding. It concentrates on the perspective-taking capacities of a small sample of fifth-grade students and the role empathy plays in the perspective-taking and in the learning of history. The research provides educators with an empirical representation of fifth graders perspective-taking capacities and a goal of designing curriculum to match students' understandings and ways of learning in history. Data, primarily interviews with students and interview transcripts, are analyzed using qualitative and interpretive research methodology. Three levels of historical thinking and perspective-taking were found. The levels appear qualitatively differentiated and multifaceted, and support the view that historical understanding develops along a continuum of thought and is influenced by several variables, including personal experience and family background. (Contains 31 references.) (BT)

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ENGAGING IN HISTORY: EMPATHY AND PERSPECTIVE-TAKING IN CHILDREN'S HISTORICAL THINKING

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ABSTRACT

For children to understand history, they need to be able to see the world through the eyes of its participants, and to understand that there are multiple perspectives on the past. This paper concerns the issue of relating theory to practice in history and social studies teaching and curriculum design, with emphasis on historical perspective-taking and empathy as fundamental components of historical understanding. Fostering perspective-taking and empathy in students fulfills another traditional goal of the social studies: education for the social good. Active and thoughtful participation in a diverse and democratic society often requires exercising complex multidimensional thinking: to "see through the eyes of another" in the spheres of social, moral, and civic relations. The paper synthesizes theory and scholarship from the disciplines of human psychology, history, and education. Drawing especially upon the works of John Dewey and Jean Piaget, and recent scholarship in history education, the study examines the construction of historical understanding, concentrating on the perspective-taking capacities of a small sample of fifth grade students and the role that empathy plays in this perspective-taking and in their learning of history. The research provides educators with an empirical representation of fifth grade students' perspective-taking capacities, with the goal of designing curriculum that will better "match" students' understandings -- and ways of learning -- in history. The data, which consist primarily of interviews with students and interview transcripts, are analyzed using qualitative and interpretive research methodology. Three levels of historical thinking and perspective-taking are found. These levels appear qualitatively differentiated and multifaceted, and support the view that historical understanding develops along a continuum of thought and is influenced by several variables, including personal experience and family background. Engaging students through pedagogical methods that are based on inquiry, explanation, and interaction with rich content is found to be especially important in the construction of historical perspectives. This study is intended to inform and support the work of teacher educators, experienced elementary school teachers, new teachers, and curriculum developers.

Introduction

This paper reports a study of the development of perspective-taking and empathy as fundamental components of historical understanding. The purpose of the research is to provide educators with an empirical representation of children's perspective-taking capacities, and to better understand the ways they think about and learn history. A longer term goal is of designing curriculum standards, instructional strategies, and assessments that will better "match" students' understandings -- and ways of learning -- in history.

Learning to take another's perspective, and caring enough to do so, is essential in understanding history (Downey,1995; Levstik,1997; Thornton,1994; Wineburg,1999). It is also essential in getting along with others in daily life, and in learning to understand what is strange and different in another person -- be it someone who shares the same classroom, community or planet. For children to understand history, they need to be able to see the world through the eyes of its participants, and to understand that there are multiple perspectives on the past. This ability to put oneself or walk in another's shoes involves both feeling and thinking. We might describe the feeling aspect of this capacity as empathy, and the more cognitive or thinking aspect as perspective-taking. In the study reported below, empathy and perspective-taking are seen to be related in the process of learning history, as thinking and feeling are related in the learning process, more generally.

This paper is based on a study of the historical thinking of sixteen fifth-grade students. The research questions are 1) What are the perspective-taking capacities or the range of capacities of a small sample of fifth-grade students? 2) What is the role that empathy plays in this perspective-taking and in the learning of history? 3) What can educators do to support, match and develop these capacities? Within this framework, the study also examines the concepts of student-curriculum integration, personal experience in and outside of school, and the unity of thought and feeling in the teaching and learning of history.

Theoretical Framework

The current study synthesizes theory and scholarship from the disciplines of human psychology, history, and education, drawing especially upon the works of John Dewey (1900/1966, 1913/1975) and Jean Piaget (1954/1981), as well as current scholars in the field of

history education (Barton,1997; Downey, 1995; Knight,1989; Levstik,1997; Seixas,1996; Shemilt,1980; Wineburg,1999). The writings of Lev Vygotsky (1978) have deeply influenced reform-minded constructivist educators, emphasizing, in particular, the importance of culture and context in educational research. In its focus on the historical thinking of children through the close study of the thinking of particular children, this study employs specific aspects of Piaget's developmental constructivism, the dynamic process of equilibration and its role in knowledge construction, for example (Fosnot,1996). A future paper will more fully address the interplay between individual cognition, social context, and culture within a constructivist theory of teaching.

Historians and educators agree that perspective-taking and empathy are critical to the key components of historical thinking: explanation and understanding. But while numerous studies have been conducted on empathy and perspective-taking in the context of children's cognitive and social development (Cowan, 1978; Damon,1988; Piaget and Inhelder,1948. Selman,1971), less is known about how these important capacities develop within the context of children's learning history in school and ways in which individual culture and experience may influence this development. In recent decades, British educators debated the definitions and purposes of empathy and perspective-taking as goals of the national history curriculum (Ashby and Lee, 1987; Boddington,1980; Knight, 1989; Portal, 1987; Shemilt, 1980). More recently, in the United States, researchers have sought to better understand children's thinking in history, including perspective-taking (Cox, 2000; Levstik,1995; Downey,1995; Brophy,1999). These studies represent the beginnings of the research base on children's historical perspective-taking and historical understanding.

The present study relates these current understandings of children's learning in history to Dewey's writings (1902/1966), where he urges us to understand that both the child and the subject matter must figure equally in our conceptions of curriculum. Knight (1989) echoes this, arguing that our discussion about empathy in history should be shifted from the curriculum to the child and a better understanding of children's learning and thinking in history. Furthermore, he writes, we ought to focus on developing a realistic sense of "children's differentiated understanding of the past" based on empirical study of "what children think and do when they try to understand others not known to them through a reciprocal relationship." (p.46). The current

study attempts to contribute to the research base about children's thinking in history by providing this glimpse into their perspective-taking and empathy at a particular point in their development.

This study uses a developmental constructivist model of children's thought and learning, suggesting that children's thinking about history will be different from adults' thinking, and that children's thinking in history develops and changes as they gain experience, knowledge, and practice with history. That is, it becomes more elaborate, sophisticated, abstract and multidimensional. Piagetian theory helps us understand the dialectical nature of learning: that it is always an interaction between the individual and his or her environment; that it is continuous and individually paced; and that it is social as well as cognitive. Constructivism helps us understand the importance of engagement, interaction, and context in learning at all ages. This perspective offers explanations and guidelines for teaching history to young students, for dealing with the limitations of younger students' thinking, and for designing instruction that develops more sophisticated thinking.

Methods and Data

The design and methodology of this research are based in the qualitative and interpretative tradition of ethnographic research applied to education. The setting for the study was a fifth grade classroom in an urban public school located near a public University. The class was chosen based on the teacher's rich and interdisciplinary curriculum, which she taught conscientiously and enthusiastically. Students were selected on a volunteer basis. Data collection included both non-interactive and interactive methods. The primary body of data used for the study was the tapes and transcriptions of interviews and classroom observations. Other data included student mindmaps, written assignments, and family questionnaires. Each student was interviewed once individually, then twice in a small group during the spring of their fifth grade year. A preliminary, hypothetical domain analysis was constructed before the interviews took place, using characteristics of perspective-taking identified by Downey (1995) and Knight (1989). This facilitated the formulation of interview questions and the recognition of perspective-taking and empathy when they appeared in the interview context. Later, they were used as a preliminary coding scheme during the first stage of data analysis.

The interview questions were designed to focus on the nature of students' thinking rather than on the possession of "right" and "wrong" answers (Raths, et al, 1986; Spradley, 1979; Shatzman & Strauss, 1973). Questions were structured to avoid "yes" and "no" answers as much

as possible. I asked open-ended questions which emphasized such higher order thinking skills as explaining, predicting, or imagining. In some cases the questions were based on curriculum from the current school year that the students had already studied. In other cases, questions were based on a hypothetical situation posed by the interviewer. Although the sequence of questions was planned ahead of time, I improvised and adjusted the questions and their sequence as appropriate. The interviews were tape-recorded.

This paper deals with two of the major question sets included in the interviews. After the opening introductions and explanations, the interview session began with a brief series of questions designed to introduce the idea of perspective-taking at the same time as it engaged the students' interest in thinking and talking about the past. Students were shown a small (12" x 7") diorama of an "old-fashioned" kitchen made of wood. Students were asked to imagine, "Who might live here?" and "What would it be like to live here?" I proceeded to ask more abstract questions about students' thinking about people who lived in the past, in circumstances that were studied during the past school year. For example, students were asked to define "taking another perspective." Typically, this would be followed by questions about their own experience with taking another's perspective, and then, finally, they were asked if there were any times when they were able to take the perspective of someone they had learned about, who lived in another time in history.

The interview followed a general "script," with allowances for follow-up questions and digressions as I deemed appropriate. Questions were designed with students' prior learning experiences in mind, using the social studies curriculum for the current year as a guide. Students' social experiences were drawn upon through questions related to empathy and perspective-taking with friends and within their families. References were made to other possible sources of information such as movies and books, when relevant.

The relationship between historical perspective-taking and empathy has been described as murky, partly because it is has been difficult for scholars to agree on a definition of empathy, and more importantly, to answer the question, how do we know it when we see it? In this study, I attempted to concretize the "feeling" of empathy. I looked for signs of empathy in the presence of and extent of such operational definitions as role-taking, use of affective terms, signs of projection, and the like.

The data were analyzed in three stages using qualitative and interpretive research methodology through detailed study of the data. For example, by studying the students' words, attempts were made to find evidence of their thinking through patterns, relationships, ideas, and their meaning, thereby breaking a "path" to more general understandings about their differentiated capacities for displaying these elements of historical thinking. Premature typification of the data was avoided through ongoing conceptualization and reconceptualization of the units of analysis and by applying standards of adequate evidence: variety, quality, depth and detail of evidence. The units of analysis included, for example, categories of student thought: understanding, reflection, elements of perspective-taking such as narrative, chronology, explanation, empathy, as well as examples of confusion or inability to answer a question. Revision of the hypothetical domains of perspective-taking, refining the tentative typology, and interpreting the findings was ongoing. Three levels of thought, representing clusters of qualitatively different ways of thinking about history and perspective-taking were created based on the emergent patterns and similarities found in the data. In the third stage of analysis, an attempt was made to define the perspective-taking demonstrated by the research students, and to describe the characteristics, the range, and the limitations among them.

Results

Three levels of historical thinking and perspective-taking were found. These levels support the view that children's understanding of people in the past is qualitatively differentiated and multifaceted in more than one way. First, it is differentiated along the continuum of developing historical understanding. Second, it is differentiated and multifaceted at each point on the continuum because it is a construction and expression of each individual's thought. This supports the view that perspective-taking is not a unitary concept that one either "has or doesn't have," but that it may be taught and developed as part of the history curriculum.

These levels are interesting because they are empirical representations of children's learning. It should be remembered that as such, they are not fixed, but dynamic and changing. Even more interesting is what is learned generally about children's thinking in history: their ideas, the influences and sources affecting their learning, and the application of these findings to teaching. It was found that a student's historical perspective-taking appears to be influenced by the interaction of a number of variables, including his or her particular family culture, individual language abilities, and past experience, at each of the three levels.

These three levels are described and examples are given, illustrating this link between empathy and perspective-taking. In this study, the link is seen primarily through what I have called "personal connections," although such important elements of historical thinking as explanation and evidence were used in determining the level assigned a particular student. Making a "personal connection" with a historical person or event appears to be an essential component of the research students' perspective-taking capacities. This personal connection occurs through shared gender or ethnicity, a lived experience, or a more imaginary and abstract vehicle, such as reading historical fiction or a primary source. Additionally, the nature of the connection varied with and appeared to be tied to the levels of the students' thinking.

These personal connections may be described as affective "points of engagement" into the curriculum, a phrase used by the developmental psychologist, Eleanor Duckworth (1987). The study suggests that thinking and feeling work together when children learn history, and that these points of engagement or personal connection are important in promoting students' interest, caring, and engagement in history. It may be that here is the caring, or empathy, that sparks children's "need to know," catapulting their inquiry and efforts to find answers to their own, real questions about the lives of those who were or are different from them.

The Research on Perspective-taking

Psychologists have studied perspective-taking as part of charting the social and cognitive development of the individual for many years. Jean Piaget advanced research and theory on perspective-taking when he studied children's spatial or physical perspective-taking, conceived as the cognitive ability to see a physical structure literally from more than one perspective. In the well-known "Three Mountains Task," Piaget and Inhelder (1948) observed the ability or inability of children to take the point of view of a doll when it was placed with different "points of view" in relation to a model of three mountains constructed for this purpose. Piaget used this task to learn about children's developing ability to coordinate two and three dimensions in space. This task requires a child to combine physical and social dimensions of thought (spatial, representational, and verbal communication). Piaget found that the youngest children (four to six year olds) could not disengage themselves from their own view of things. These children knew the doll had a different point of view from theirs, but they could not choose the right picture to represent the dolls' perspective. They could only point to or describe their own.

This experiment demonstrated that young children have a limited awareness of and capacity to adopt other points of view. In fact, they do not begin to develop the capacity to see things from another perspective until they are around seven years of age. This research led Piaget to conclude that physical perspective-taking was linked to "decentration," the process by which children move from egocentric, or one dimensional, thought to the development of perspectivism, or multidimensional thinking, in their conception and experience of both the social and physical worlds (Piaget, 1954; Ginsberg and Opper, 1988; Cowan, 1978). An important feature of decentration is that it is a gradual process that begins in infancy and becomes more multifaceted with experience.

The Three Mountains Task is a concretization of multidimensional thinking. When an individual is capable of multidimensional thinking, she goes beyond merely understanding that there *is* more than one point of view. Rather, she is able to construct more than one point of view and *hold them in mind simultaneously*. This requires the ability to coordinate more than one concept or thought, i.e. being able to use them together. Put another way, it means being able to operationalize multiple factors or elements simultaneously. A person is typically in late childhood, and just beginning to develop formal thinking (around ten to twelve years of age), before she reaches this degree of decentration (the movement away from egocentrism to perspectivism).

Piaget's larger theory of cognitive development was based on the proposition that qualitative, structural changes in children's understandings take place through interaction between the individual and the environment. In the Three Mountains study, his interest was in children's understanding of spatial relations, not in their understanding of or ability to take diverse social perspectives. The Three Mountains Task was an investigation of the development of children's logical reasoning applied to a spatial perspective-taking task. However, although Piaget made no direct connection between spatial and social perspective-taking, his earlier work had suggested parallels between development in the two domains.

In an early study, Piaget (1923) studied egocentrism as demonstrated by young children's tendency to use language without taking into account the requirements of the listener. He also briefly studied (1932) the development of morality in the context of children's conceptions of rules and standards in their games. He came to see social interaction as significant in the developmental process, and particularly in the shift from egocentrism to decentration. To be able

to participate in a relationship of reciprocity, to participate in the balancing between two viewpoints, a child must be able to "get out of herself" and see through another's eyes, and the process of decentration must be well underway (Asprodites, 1986, Damon, 1977; Wadsworth, 1989).

> What then gives rise to the need for verification? Surely, it must be the shock of our thoughts coming into contact with that of others, which produces doubt and the desire to prove.
>
> Piaget, 1928, cited in Halaby, 1995 p. 1

The child's need for the verification and explanation of ideas contributes to this shift. It is seen primarily in social interaction with peers, as the child plays and converses with others (Halaby, 1995). Most elementary school aged children (six to eleven years old, roughly speaking) are probably in the midst of this developmental shift. Moving away from the egocentrism of preoperational thinking, they are beginning to decenter their perceptions, becoming aware that others can come to conclusions which are different from theirs.

The most serious impediment to psychologists' understanding the development of children's perspective-taking has been "construct validity." The question must be confronted: do the stages and levels described above represent the sequential development of a *unitary* or global structure that changes with experience and maturation? Or is perspective-taking better defined as a *multifaceted* process that develops over time and which takes into account several aspects of a child's social life, as Turiel (cited in Asprodites, 1986) claims? While it is not within the scope of this paper to elaborate on this particular point, it is useful and important to determine whether we assume a unitary or differentiated view of perspective-taking According to Damon (1988), the current consensus is that role-taking is a multifaceted enterprise rather than one generalized ability, and that a child's ability to take perspectives may depend on several variables, including the particular context and the child's previous experience. Developmental psychologists are moving away from original Piagetian conceptions of structural development to one which, while still based in Piaget's developmental constructivism, allows for the development of multidimensional constructs that may be differentiated by domains, among other things.

Thinking and Feeling Appear Together - The Role of Empathy and Affect in Learning History

Dewey (1913) wrote that each of the two components, interest and effort, must be present for "real" learning to occur. Piaget (1954) understood this as well. He wrote that feeling and cognition are inseparable; they are "two sides of the same coin." The psychologist William Damon (1988) has suggested that empathy and perspective-taking are the affective and cognitive aspects of a common process

In the learning process, the affective element can be seen as the "spark" that lights the "fuel" of motivation that, then, drives the engine of learning, seen as the outward expression of cognition. This is a description of disequilibration, the cognitive dissonance that may be experienced by the child as surprise, confusion, or simple puzzlement. This is the impetus for learning -- the moment when students begin to ask their own questions: "How can this be? How can these two things be true? What explains this? How can I find out more about this?" The desire or need to return to equilibrium, or balance, which results from the achievement of resolution and understanding, is the underpinning of motivation.

The link between cognition and affect is evidenced throughout the study, with affect appearing to be important in promoting students' interest, caring, and engagement in history. Seen through the words of the research students, the process of learning and thinking about history involves a back and forth rhythm between affect and cognition. The affective appears to function as a "point of engagement," perhaps the primary one. It is seen coming into play at all levels. For example, when one of the students, Steve, says, "I need to know," he is expressing the motivation he feels to learn about something; he is apparently driven by the disequilibrium that he experiences. Learning through personally meaningful inquiry and discovery proceeds from there.

Affect is a "way in" for all of the students at each of the three Levels. For the Level 1 and Level 2 students, affect seems to be the primary or only way the student makes a connection with history; they move through family, culture, or prior experience to thinking about history.

Affect is the "way in" for Level 3 students, too: an affective response seems to begin their thinking in history. This link between feeling and thinking is especially apparent when they try to take perspective. It is the point of engagement; it is what draws them in. However, the thinking of students at Level 3 is differentiated from that of students at Levels 2 and 1 by the

way it appears to begin with the affective, but goes beyond it, or through it. It is as if the more cognitive aspect of perspective-taking "kicks in" after being "warmed up" by the affective or feeling experience. In the following sections, I discuss and give examples of the different ways that students appeared to engage in historical thinking through the affective "way in."

Students Need to Make Personal Connections

The data indicate that recognizing the role of empathy or affect in learning, creating personal "points of entry," and connecting to prior experience are of greatest importance in children's learning of history. Personal experience and background knowledge are the ways all of the research students appear to make their "connections" with history. Experienced teachers of history and social studies will surely recognize their students' ways of connecting in the examples below. This research suggests that making these personal connections is necessary for student engagement and learning in history, a discipline that is often as contextually and experientially unfamiliar as it is chronologically and physically remote.

How this personal connection is experienced and defined seems to broaden with more developed thought. For example, the concrete prompt used in the study, the diorama (described below), reminded Robin (Level 1) of a literally "concrete" (i.e., "real") dollhouse she knew about. David (Level 2) connected through his personal experience of going on a camping trip and living a more "rugged" life. His is a different kind of "concrete"; it is a "lived" experience, the experiential basis for "knowing" in the concrete, physical world. But for Heidi and Eva (both Level 3), living in the past could be envisioned through thinking about their readings of historical fiction and the vicarious or imagined experience and feeling produced in this way.

This is consistent with the premise that learning begins with the self, or what developmentalists term "with the child." What this means, precisely, varies from individual to individual because different "selves" or students differ and are at alternative stages of development. A pattern emerges wherein particular students needed or were restricted to particular kinds of connections, ranging from "very restricted" (Level 1), to "restricted" (Level 2), and "least restricted" (Level 3). The important finding is that a personal connection of some kind was necessary at all levels and that the nature of the connections appears to be differentiated according to the levels reached.

At the "very restricted" level (Level 1) , students appeared to need physically concrete and literal connections; at Level 2, "restricted" students seemed to need a literally personal and

experiential connection, but not necessarily a physical one; and at Level 3, the "least restricted" students seemed to have the widest variety of ways to make a connection. Their connections, while rooted in a personal experience such as a field trip or reading a book, appeared also to enter the realm of the imagined, the hypothetical, the abstract.

Trying to Take Historical Perspectives

These personal connections appeared particularly crucial when students attempted to take historical perspectives. Furthermore, it seemed that all the students had to move through the personal to be able to take perspective at all.

It should be remembered that this research offers a "snapshot" of student thinking in a given moment for the sake of study. It should be emphasized that students are not "stuck" at a particular level of thought, but are expected to continue to learn and develop to the next and further levels of thought. Thus, there is the warrantable assumption that students' thinking will move from Level 1 to Level 2 and so on. Just as learning and development are ongoing and continuous, their historical thinking will continue to change and develop, provided they engage in experiences and reflections that foster such development.

In the present study these levels were created to permit discussion of the particular question at hand, not the entire range of historical thinking. After further research is conducted, a more comprehensive model of the development of historical thinking may be construed.

The following discussion of the interview findings has been organized by two of the main question sets within the interview: "The Diorama" and "Point of View and Perspective-taking in History." Each question set is briefly described, with discussion of selected interview transcripts from each level.

The Diorama

At the beginning of each interview the student was shown a framed, wooden diorama of an "old-fashioned" kitchen. I encouraged the student to look at it, touch it, and imagine what it would have been like to live there. My intention was to engage the student's interest in thinking and talking about the past. It did this and more.

The responses to this tiny kitchen were as nearly individual as fingerprints; each student's imagination seemed to awaken, setting in motion a series of highly varied comments including memories, observations, questions about the scene, and assumptions about the life lived within it. Students often also remarked on an aspect of the diorama that was familiar: "It is

like my mom's dollhouse," or "I've been somewhere like this before." Another general reaction was that many of the students quickly noted whether they would like living there or not. A few students focused on naming the objects in the scene, while others immediately began to notice how different and how much more difficult it would be to have lived there than in their present homes.

While it was stronger in some than in others, each student displayed an emotional or affective response to the scene, no two the same, which appeared to stir in the child an interest in observing more closely or imagining more deeply what life in another time might have been like. It was as if the students, when looking at the diorama, became engaged emotionally and imaginatively with it. They appeared to enter its world, playing with the idea of living there much the way children do when they play with such other objects in their lives as dolls, trucks, and dress-up clothes.

In one sense, this opening to the interview revealed at the micro-level what the entire interview was soon to show: the students became engaged, at least partly, through their affective responses to the diorama. It was their "way in," and through it they revealed their personal ways of thinking about historical content. As the interviewer, I was, in turn, enabled to glimpse their historical thinking through a more honest and natural interaction.

Most interesting of all was that in each student's response to this small scene was a foreshadowing, to some degree, of his or her "way into" thinking about history, a way of connecting with history, in general: an overall capacity to think historically and to take historical perspectives, as shown through later analysis of the complete interview. For example, students responded to questions about the diorama variously: The amount and kind of language used was an important factor in determining the level of sophistication and complexity of thought. A student might respond in one sentence or a paragraph, provide several examples to support a statement or give no examples at all, use a limited or large vocabulary. Other factors contributing to the assignment of a level concerned the information a student brought to the discussion, and the level of concreteness, or egocentricity, with which a student characteristically responded. Recognizing that these levels reflect individual development which results from the interactions of these and other variables underscores that the most important element in discerning the "level" of historical thinking and perspective-taking was what sort of "sense" did

they make of my questions, what background knowledge did they bring to their responses and how did they use it? In other words, how did they put these variables together?

A particular variety of response often characterized the interview throughout, and corresponded to the particular student's way of thinking about history; this, in turn, could be related to that student's own level of historical thinking and perspective-taking as later analyzed.

Level 1 Students' Responses to the Diorama

Despite their diversities, students at Level 1 shared several characteristics in their responses to the diorama and to my question: "What do you think it would be like to live there?" They tended to focus on the physical facts present in the scene, and their comments were also limited to personal, literal, and "here and now" responses. Here are some verbatim examples:

> Yes, I have this like - my sister has this doll house. Actually, my mom had this doll house when she was really young, and I'd be like - I thought how it would be like to live in that doll house. Or sometimes I make up like our whole family living in this one-room place. (Robin)

> [It would be] . . . very crowded, with my whole family. . . There are seven of us . . . . My niece is really thin, so she could get into there.
>
> (Alice)

> Well, it's not the way my house looks, so it would be totally new to me. And, well, maybe the food would be different. (Sara)

Level 1 students were generally limited in their comments about the diorama. Their thinking about it seemed to stop once they found something familiar or known -- that personal connection. Level 1 students' responses were more "self-related" or egocentric in comparison to the responses of students in the other two groups. The individuals in this group appeared to have less inclination or ability to get "out of themselves"; compared to their fellow students, they displayed less imagination and far less interest in or capacity to predict, imagine or hypothesize.

One Level 1 student, Bob, showed great interest in the objects in the diorama. He spent several minutes naming each object and in some cases remarking on its function, how it might have been made, etc. While the attempt to recall and use historical information or background knowledge was a sign of his engagement and knowledge base, the fact that he did little more than name the objects signals the Level 1 limitation to his response when compared to students in the other two groups.

> I like the way this is done.... I like - that's supposed to be a post. And that's like a table and that's a little butter churner or something, and that's a pot. . . . That's a pan. I think it's like a heating pan for the bed. You put the coals in, and then put it under your bed, and it warms up, and then you take it out and go to sleep.

For Bob, naming the objects and surmising their purpose may have been important as his "way in" or "point of entry" to historical study. He is probably the variety of student who enjoys "hands-on" projects and practical applications in most domains of knowledge. Learning how something was made or how it worked may be instrumental to Bob's becoming engaged in history. This is an important piece of the data that will consistently appear throughout the interviews: each student finds a "way in," making that personal connection that appears prominent in engaging students in history.

Acknowledging the personal, affective connection -- their own personal interest in the diorama -- seemed to be the "beginning and the end" of Level 1 students' responses, however. The connection was made, but limited. These students' thinking showed itself confined to their own experience with the concrete object, displaying only the beginnings of more complex historical thought, such as the application of historical knowledge, making evaluations based on evidence, and providing examples.

Level 2 Students' Responses to the Diorama

Students in Level 2 could be said to be in transition between Level 1 and Level 3. They displayed many of the same kinds of responses to the diorama as Level 1 students, but their responses were as a whole qualitatively different. Among the similarities with Level 1 was a reference to themselves and their own experiences; their comments, like Level 1 students, were

primarily self-referential. As with the Level 1 students, the diorama did not prompt as much talk about living "there" as it elicited comments about "me" and "I."

One significant difference in the Level 2 students' thought was that they had fuller responses than the Level 1 students; they usually said more than one sentence and showed somewhat more imagination and interest -- a difference reflected in both quantity and quality of talk. They also appeared more involved in the diorama, showing greater interest and enthusiasm, and appearing to possess some ability to put themselves in the place of someone who might have lived there, or to begin to imagine what that life might be like. Their attempts at perspective-taking were, however, restricted. For example,

> [It would be] . . . a little bit fun because it could be like on a camping trip. Every time I go on a camping trip, I really have fun.
>
> (David)

My questions appeared to move David's thinking along, prompting him to go farther in his imagining than he would have without the prompts. With some encouragement and prodding, he explained how having the butter churn would be different.

> *"How would it be different?"*
> "You would usually just buy butter out of the store, but now here you've gotta make it. How you cook , right there . You don't have a oven or a stove just a pot under a fire . Let's see. The style. Different style of everything. The decoration, like on the table and on the plates.

The ways in which David pointed out these differences and made comparisons with life in the present signified that his thinking was more developed than that of the students in Level 1.

Another boy at Level 2, Danny, had a lot to say in this first segment of the interview. He quickly made a judgment about life in the kitchen depicted in the diorama, and then backed it up with evidence from his own experience. He seemed particularly interested in talking about his *own* "stuff," while his observations about the diorama were almost perfunctory:

> Well, it wouldn't be so comfortable. It would be like very little room, and I'm used to my, my equipment, like my TV, and my computer. I have my favorite type of chair with a very bouncy bottom. This [bench] probably was hard . . . And that's about it.

When prodded with more questions about *how* it would be different, Danny merely repeated what he had said without adding new insights:

> I would do a lot of work getting everything ready, 'cuz in my house all I have to do is slide something into the microwave, press a button. . .

Although Danny was more expansive in his responses than the Level 1 students, his focus remained on himself and his personal frame of reference, his belongings, and his interests throughout this question set. His imagining of what it might be like to live there was restricted to direct comparisons with his own experience.

Another Level 2 student's responses also show quite a bit more imagination than the Level 1 students, but demonstrate a similarly limited ability to use evidence and information. Responding to the question, *"Who do you think might live here?"* he said,

> Maybe a wife and her husband. I don't think there would be any kids, because I don't think there's anything the kids can do right here. And because like if this were a whole entire room, there wouldn't be any bed.
>
> (Larry)

Larry is still very literal in his thinking, though he displays more historical imagination than Level 1 students.

The Level 2 students' responses to the diorama show that they may have had more knowledge at hand and possibly more imagination and curiosity than Level 1 students, -- especially Larry: "Hey - I didn't know they had coo-coo clocks back then!" They expressed more awareness of differences between the past and the present.

As with Level 1 students, once Level 2 students had said whatever they had to say, they were "done." They said more than Level 1 students -- but not a lot more -- and much less than Level 3 students. Their response were fuller, more imaginative, and displayed a greater ability to verbalize thoughts than Level 1. Yet, their responses to the diorama, particularly their historical imagining and perspective-taking were still notably concrete and egocentric in comparison to those of Level 3 students.

Level 3 Students' Responses to the Diorama

Students at Level 3 had a lot to say about the diorama, displaying active imaginations and the ability to draw upon background knowledge and personal experience while making predictions and hypotheses. These students, in contrast to students at Level 1 and Level 2, were able to put themselves imaginatively in the position of someone who might have lived in a kitchen like the one represented in the diorama.

As with the students at the other levels, those at Level 3 displayed a range of responses to the old-fashioned kitchen scene; that is, there were differences among them. These differences were small, however, when compared to the more striking differences between the group as a whole and the students at Level 2 and Level 1.

Level 3 responses were more developed than those at Level 1 or Level 2, in general, but they were limited to concrete thought in most cases. At this level, we see more hints of formal thought in several students, reminding us of the uneven and inconsistent nature of development. On the whole, these students' responses were qualitatively different from Level 2 students' responses, but still showed some characteristics of Level 2 thinking. It is helpful to remember that the levels represent clumps of student thinking along a continuum, rather than a uniform or homogeneous group.

The Level 3 students gave responses evidencing an ability to leap backwards through time -- imagining themselves as someone else, probably a child, who might have lived in this context. Even so, all of them made continual references to themselves in their remarks, as in "I wouldn't like the work." These responses appeared to be dictated by their affective responses or feelings, personal connections, and a relatively concrete or literal approach to the study of history (by adult standards).

Like the students in Level 1, most Level 3 students' first observations focused on something familiar in the scene, something they knew about through personal experience or

reading. Some responded at the affective level, choosing words to describe the "feeling" evoked by the scene. Unlike the statements made by Level 1 and Level 2 students, these remarks by Level 3 students were the beginning of much more elaborated and imaginative comments about what life in the old-fashioned kitchen might have been like. In addition, their responses described the scene and its context, rather than merely relating the scene to their immediate and personal association with it.

Several Level 3 students' first comments were about the physical aspects of the scene, as were those of students at the lower levels. There was a general appreciation of the differences between "then" and "now," and an almost unanimous preference for the present. These thoughts were characterized by such comments as "it would be much harder," "no electricity - would have to make own candles," "couldn't go to the supermarket for butter, would have to make own butter." Some responses indicated a negative appreciation of the life depicted or imagined; others were more positive:

> Cramped - really small. (Eva)

> Well, it's not that big, so I wouldn't really like to live there and - well- it's not electronic, so I mean - they don't have anything like TVs or something but it would be kinda fun just living there . . . (Ricky)

> I think it'd be cool to live back then, but I'm sure it would be a lot different, and harder, and easier in ways. . . . I think it would be really hard, you know. . . . because it'd be hard to travel with your family and then a lot of cholera was going around. . . . Like we have electricity now and stuff, and they had to like make their own butter. You couldn't go to Safeway and buy it. (Katie)

> I think it's a kind of old fashioned home, and I would like to live in a nice, old fashioned home. . . . Because I'd like to live more natural than with electricity and everything. (Paula)

They constructed ideas about how it would be different, for instance in that one would have to devise one's own entertainment, like playing an instrument, and wondering what kids would do for enjoyment:

> The entertainment would be, like you'd have to make it, and when you just do stuff, it's like if you want to like make some bread, you don't go and buy all the materials. You gotta go out in the fields and just pick some like wheat or something and grind it up, and, well, I, I don't, I don't really like to work that much, so I wouldn't . .
>
> (Ricky)

Some Level 3 students related the scene to personal past experiences: a last year's school trip to Petaluma Adobe, or a family friend with a cabin heated by a wood-burning stove. These linkages were generally associated with a statement expressing a positive feeling toward the life they imagine in the past: "I would like living there," or "It would be kind of nice, living in that old-fashioned way. "

Katie talked about prevalent diseases like cholera and volunteered other tidbits of historical information that came to mind. And Heidi said it reminded her of The Witch of Blackbird Pond, a historical novel by Elizabeth Spear (1958) set in colonial America.

These students were making comparisons, noting similarities and differences between the past and the present; they were evaluating the differences and giving reasons for their judgments. They were speculating on what things might be used for, employing their background knowledge and imaginations to make hypotheses about life in such an old-fashioned home; they were applying their historical knowledge, giving examples, and using evidence to the best of their ability. It is apparent that they were using combinations of information gleaned from school learnings and home experiences, from reading historical novels and seeing movies. They were drawing upon and synthesizing their information from these combined sources.

Eva pointed out, "It wouldn't be old-fashioned at the time." She was one of only a few students who made such a reference to the concept of historical context. She attempted to place the diorama in a time-period: ". . . . probably around the time of Paul Revere," she said.

In short, Level 3 students were exhibiting and applying several elements of relatively well-developed historical thinking. That these elements were applied partially or inconsistently is consistent with developmental theory. Finding these elements applied at the *students' level* exemplifies the way that these students' historical thinking was developing and changing in the direction of formal thought.

The questions about the diorama asked students to deal with a concrete object, to observe and discuss it in ways that called forth many levels of historical thought that were still grounded in the tangible and the here and now. The next question set in the interview raised the level of discourse to one of greater abstraction.

Point of View and Perspective-taking in the Present and the Past

This question set began with the students being asked what they thought it means to take someone else's point of view. Following the premise that young children best begin more abstract thinking -- in this case thinking about the past -- by first thinking about their personal experiences in the present, each student was asked, "Have you ever taken someone else's point of view or wished that someone would take your point of view?"

In this way, students had a chance to talk about their own "concrete" or "lived" experiences with perspective-taking, and to express their own understandings of perspective-taking before the interview moved into the more abstract realm of historical perspective-taking. This piece of the interview provided a way to learn more about what the students thought perspective-taking means through their own examples.

Following this fairly brief discussion about what "point of view" means, students were asked if there were anyone in history they had learned about whose perspective they thought they could take, someone for whom they had a good idea or feeling of what it might have been like to have "been" that person.

Level 1 Students' Ideas about Point of View and Historical Perspective-taking - Limited to the Personal

Most of the students in Level 1 gave examples that were neither generalized nor hypothetical but about specific experiences they had had in the recent past. Their thinking about point of view and perspectives was thus restricted.

For Robin, "point of view" seemed to be a difficult concept to put into words. Although she answered "yes" when I asked, *"Do you think it is possible to put yourself in someone else's*

position?" her explanations were notably limited. She seemed to struggle to get a grasp on the words to express what she was thinking about putting oneself in anothers' shoes. In what appeared to be haphazard attempts at citing examples of her own experiences with perspective-taking, she mentioned Harriet Tubman, the fiction title, The Indian in the Cupboard (Banks, 1980), her mother, and her brother.

In an effort to find examples of people she had found interesting, Robin became so confused about the different Indian tribes that she could not go on. She seemed to be grasping at the straws of whatever she could remember, apparently lost and "out of her depth" when responding to a question which she accurately interpreted to require a more specific and thoughtful response.

Alice's response to the question, *"how would you explain what 'taking someone's point of view' means?"* was restricted to the notion of "different opinions."

> Well, two people might have a different opinion, and then if one person says, "Yes, I think that ivy is poisonous," the other one says, "No, I think ivy is not poisonous," then try to put yourself in that person's place. I mean, and then try to get more information about their ideas.

When asked if there were someone she had learned about in social studies whose perspective she felt she could take, she said,

> Probably Susan B. Anthony. She fought for women's rights and she was really strong about it. She wouldn't coward away.

Here we see an example of the confusion between being impressed by or appreciative of someone who lived in the past, perhaps identifying in some sense, and taking that person's point of view. While Alice seemed to understand something of the historical importance and implications of Susan B. Anthony's work, even after some prompting and prodding she was not taking perspective. She demonstrated a better grasp on historical perspective-taking when I reworded the question, asking who she would like to have "been":

> I'd want to have a farm or like be somebody who had like a very small plantation but without slaves. In the southern areas. I wouldn't want to live around the Puritans or the Patriots because I don't believe what they believe. I believe in the king, and I'd probably want to stay out of their business. I'd just want to have my family.

Again, here is some confusion between identifying with someone and taking his or her perspective. While it is almost certainly evidence of an affective connection with the historical person, it may not carry with it the requirements of perspective-taking: taking a point of view other than one's own that is grounded in the historical context, rather than one's own. Instead, when identifying, one may transfer one's own perspective to another situation. Thus, identifying with someone from the past is not the same as taking perspective, but it may be a step toward it or an early form of it.

Level 1 students exhibit the kind of concrete, literal, and very personally connected thinking about perspective-taking that I would expect. When they were able to take perspective, it was relatively simple and limited, and almost entirely restricted to the personal.

Level 2 Students' Ideas about Point of View and Historical Perspective-taking: Less Restricted but Still Limited to the Personal

The thinking exhibited by Level 2 students in this section of the interview was more varied, both within the interview with each student and between the interviews with the different students. As Level 2 students talked, they were able to use a personal experience as a good example of perspective-taking; other times they seemed "stuck" in the description of this experience, unable to move to the point of the example. Occasionally, they were able to move out of the personal and articulate a "larger," more conceptual sense of what perspective-taking meant.

These variations within Level 2 students' responses illustrate how hard it is to "let go" of one's own perspective, seen here as the personal and concrete, and the difficulty of achieving an "out of the self" perspective; they seem to be in the middle of the transition between not being able and being able to take another perspective. Level 3 students, in their turn, will be shown to be in transition also, but at a more developed level.

For Level 2 students, the personal connection appeared to be instrumental in determining whether or not they could take another perspective. *In this they were still "personally* connected" and functioning at a fairly concrete level -- but they *were also* beginning to take another perspective. Their level of perspective-taking is a good example of the "bridge" we strive to build between a child's personal and concrete thinking and thinking that is historical and far more abstract.

For example, Larry appeared to understand what putting yourself in someone else's position meant and his response illustrates the role that empathy and caring seem to play in perspective-taking. Larry also expressed the moral imperative sometimes associated with empathy. His responses, while much more verbose than any Level 1 student's, were still specific, particular and concrete.

> I think it means like the saying, would you want it if somebody was doing that to you? Like say, somebody's pushing somebody around. I think once I went up to somebody when he was teasing somebody, and I asked, "Would you like it if he was doing that to you?" And he said, "No."
> *Do you think it's a good thing to be able to put yourself in someone else's position?*
> Yes. Because if you can't you might start teasing and teasing and teasing, and not have a problem with it, never caring.
> *So you think caring has something to do with this?*
> Well, sometimes I just have this feeling when I look at somebody that's getting teased or doesn't have [candy], and I want to do something about it, so I like, I just have to do something about it .

Danny had a different idea of what seeing things from somebody else's perspective means:

> Well, it's sorta like act like another person, and if you know that person very well, you have to like do the, answer the questions his ways, so there's no wrong or right answer. . . .

Later in the interview I asked him if he ever wished someone would take his perspective on something. He said, "No. . . . I wouldn't want somebody to be just like me."

Steve, by contrast, seemed to be grappling with certain larger aspects of perspective-taking: ethical dilemmas in politics and history. He was on the brink of being able to speak of these in more abstract terms but, less articulate than Level 3 students, he could express himself in only more "concrete" and egocentric terms. He recalled personal experiences that were examples of taking -- or learning to take -- perspective, unable yet to extrapolate into more abstract talk about what it all means.

In his response to the question, *"What do you think 'take someone else's point of view' means?"* Steve gave examples from class discussions and from a fourth grade class trip to the ship named "The Thayer," a "living history experience" in which many Bay Area classes participate.

> It means like -- I hear that a lot -- like, if I were black in, like about eighty years ago and I was treated wrong or . . . then I'd know -- that means -- what was it like, how did you feel. Um. Yeah, how would you feel, and why it's not fair. *Do you think it's possible to put yourself in somebody else's position like that?* Well, we did. Actually, um, . . . last year we learned about ship life. And we did a whole -- we studied about ship life and we even went to San Francisco, and we spent about three months just learning about ships 'cuz we were gonna go on a ship there, spend the night, and we "lived" [the history] . There were people that worked there and they pretended that they were real, and they treated us really strict cuz that's how they were. And you felt like you were just . . . . we had to go on night watch . . . . And it works 'cuz you have to learn a lot. You have to know - you get to know so much that if you didn't you'd have to 'swab the deck.'

In another part of his interview, it seemed that Steve grasped an essential part of what historical perspective-taking is about.

> In my Hebrew school class where we talk so much about the Holocaust, you know, I feel it a lot.
>
> *Why do you think that has such a big effect on you?*
>
> Because I was part of that. You know, my ancestors, my great great grandparents were . . . I've seen people who survived, who still have the tattoo, brand on them. And I never really talk about it. . . I kind of feel proud. It was a real big part of history.

He sees himself in history, making a strong personal connection: "I was a part of that." In fact, Steve seemed to focus on the Holocaust in other parts of the interview, using it as a point of reference for the discussion of perspective-taking.

Level 3 Students Talk about Point of View

Several major differences between Level 3 and Levels 1 and 2 students were seen at once. First, the quantity and quality of talk were again greater. Many were already thinking at an analytical level and had so much more to say, volunteering thoughts and experiences without being asked. They were also more serious, thoughtful, and sometimes expansive, and their thinking was comparatively complex and complete. They displayed little confusion about what perspective-taking means, and were able to provide examples of several different interpretations of taking historical perspectives.

All the same, their thinking about perspective-taking appeared "uneven," both within and across the interviews among their group. In this part of the interview there were wider intra-individual variations than in the earlier question sets. For example, within one interview a student might display relatively sophisticated thinking followed by less sophisticated ideas, contradictions, and many examples of cognitive conflict, confusion, and constructing in the moment.

Naturally, the interviews revealed many similarities as well as differences within and among the respondents. The variations among the responses to each question appear to reflect significant diversity between individual students' levels of social development, egocentrism, and cultural background, personality and life experiences, including family values and family vacation experiences. This study did not attempt to investigate or explain each of these strands of influence on students' perspective-taking; these are, however, very interesting and possibly

significant. The salient quality of Level 1 and Level 2's perspective-taking capacities was the degree to which they seemed restricted by a need to make personal connections. While Level 3 students appeared to approach perspective-taking through a personal "point of entry," this entry point was not as restricted to personal experience, though it was still the primary "way in." We also begin to see a wider definition of personal experience, sometimes through interest in an idea (which in turn was probably influenced by a prior personal experience), a piece of fiction read and enjoyed, or a family vacation to a place of historical interest. Additionally, Level 3 students were able to go farther than Level 1 or Level 2 students once the personal connection was established. In several cases, they were able to take the perspective of someone living in the past, taking into account the differences in context.

Level 3 students appeared to be more comfortable with the topic of perspective-taking, in general, and their comments tended to "go all over the place," ranging back and forth in time between the present and the historical periods studied during their current school year. Their offerings often pre-empted or anticipated my questions with the result that the questions were asked in a different sequence in each interview.

Level 3 students showed that they had a good sense of what point of view means. They seemed untroubled by the apparent difficulty of describing exactly what taking another's perspective means. Some of them described it as something that you *can* do, and simultaneously, something that you *cannot* (really) do -- or something "that you try to do, but can't do, really ." They all seemed to understand the concept and were able to give examples of perspective-taking from daily life as well as from their study of history.

Heidi said,

> To be the person. I mean I don't know how else to say. Just be.
> *Do you think it's possible to imagine yourself, to really put yourself in somebody else's shoes?*
> In a manner of speaking. I mean you can't ever be the real personality of somebody, but you can always have an idea of the way they're feeling, and you can try to think from their side. But you can't really be them.

Katie anticipated the question about historical perspective-taking, perhaps because she enjoys engaging in it, as she says,

> It means like - it's not exactly like jump in someone else's body, but to see how that person like lived or lives now, like if I want to see how you lived, being -- putting my feet in your shoes or whatever, that saying. And I think that'd be cool, if we could do that.

Katie's next remarks indicate that she is aware of the nuance of the subtle difference between *doing* what I'm doing versus really *thinking* what I'm thinking -- as in being inside my head and knowing what I am thinking:

> But you know, ... I don't know if that's possible 'cuz I don't really know what you're thinking every single second. I mean like the questions you're asking me now, I could ask someone, because that's kinda how you're thinking. . . But I can't like -- if you're thinking, oh, um, this is so boring or something, you know, I couldn't really know that. . . . So in ways I can think like you, but in ways I can't.

Victor said,

> Like to feel what they're feeling . . . Like last year I did a play called "A Midsummer Night's Dream," and Shakespeare uses lots of different language, so I had to like use that person's language.

These remarks about perspective-taking sound like "role-playing" and are thus somewhat like Level 1 students' ideas, although at other times Victor seems to operate at a higher level.

At least two of the Level 3 students associated taking another's point of view with ethical behavior. Amy spoke immediately about the golden rule.

> To me it means like you should treat somebody the way want to be treated, 'cuz you -- if you put yourself, if you were that person, would you want to be treated the way you're treating them? Does that make sense? . . So you like don't treat people like with disrespect because you don't want to be treated with disrespect

Paula linked the idea of empathy and perspective-taking with learning to do right and wrong and taking action.

> To feel what they felt, whether it was hard, whether it was OK, so that maybe that'll give you ideas maybe to, to do the right thing. . .

When I asked Paula if it were possible to take another's perspective she, like Steve in Level 2, referred to a "living history" experience her class had participated in the year before:

> If you're taken to a place where they lived, you can't be given any [modern day comforts]-- so you can feel the way they felt.
> *Are you thinking about your class trip last year?*
> Yeah, the trip to Petaluma Adobe.
> *What was it about that trip that helped you feel like you could imagine what it would be like to have really lived there?*
> Well, sleeping on the hard floor. At least we got comfortable sleeping bags. . . if I had to do that every day, I would be exhausted when I got home. . . So to do that every day and not get a bath every day . . .

Paula's perspective-taking here appears limited to her personal and physical experience of the trip; in this way her thinking is still concrete. On the other hand, she seems to be attempting to imagine what it would *really* be like to live that way every day, thus exercising some of the "back and forth" thinking necessary in true historical perspective-taking.

Eva answered the question, *"What do you think 'take another's perspective' means?"* in this way:

> It means like try and imagine what it would be like to be that person, and like how different it would be . . .
> *Do you think it's possible to put yourself in somebody else's position like that?*
> No, but you -- you can like try -- but you can't be someone else.

Robert, like Katie, introduced the idea of historical perspective-taking before I had mentioned it. When I asked him, *What does the expression, "take someone else's point of view" mean?* he replied,

> Well, [it means] going back into time, like looking through another person's eyes and thinking about what they would try and fit there . . . . Yeah ... [it's possible to do that].

After analyzing Robert's entire interview, I saw that what he meant by "fit there" included "real" perspective-taking -- taking the perspective of people from the past on their own terms, etc.

I asked all the students if and when they found it necessary or useful to take another's perspective in their daily lives. Level 3 students responded more fully to this question than did students at Level 1 or Level 2. It seemed comparatively easy for them to think of examples of perspective-taking in their daily lives, and they gave more detail. As with the students at the other levels, several Level 3 students took their examples of social perspective-taking from their interactions with family and siblings. Heidi said,

> Yeah, like when I'm fighting with my mom or my sister, I think about, OK, what did I do to make her mad? What did she do to make me . . .

Paula also gave a family example, saying that she sometimes wishes her mother would take her perspective:

> Like sometimes if I do something, and maybe she thinks it's wrong, I would think if she was in my shoes, then maybe . . . [she would] understand the way I feel. I have an opinion and stuff, so that they should listen, and just sometimes I'd like

her to be in my shoes so that she can understand that I have opinions. I'm - just because I'm a kid doesn't mean that I don't have opinions.

Eva provided a counter-example, surprising me when she said "No," she did not have to put herself in someone else's position in her daily life. She said that she did sometimes wish that someone else would take her perspective:

Yeah. . . When my brother, when I am in trouble, and it's not my fault, but my mom thinks it's my fault. My brother says it's my fault.

In many ways, Eva's historical thinking appeared to be well-developed, yet her responses to these questions were egocentric and limited, echoing remarks made by Danny and David (both Level 2). This raises questions about the relationship between an individual's level of social development and egocentrism and his or her level of historical perspective-taking. It also underscores the unevenness of development.

From the number of students' responses in this sample, it appears that parents and siblings are important in the process of learning to decenter or to take another's perspective. Level 1 and Level 2 students also gave examples using siblings and mothers. Quite likely the family, and especially sibling relationships, provide the context for one's first experiences in perspective-taking.

When I asked Robert if there were times in his daily life when he took another perspective, he described the way that his teacher sometimes takes perspectives as part of her teaching. He was the only one who made this observation:

We do it in class a lot.
Like when?
Well, when we're having discussion about two sides of something. All of us might just be one side, and so she'll say, she'll kind of argue against us and show us what the other side would be.
Do you think that's a good thing to do?
Yeah.

Do you think it's hard to do that? Why?

Like, if it's a person that you don't know much about, it could be really hard. . . and you don't really have any background about what they would think. And you need proof about what you're saying, you can't just say what pops into your head, but what your idea of [who] this person might be.

This is a prime example of one of the most important principles of developmental theory: that it is not simply the having of an experience that "produces development"; a combination of variables is necessary, among which is the capacity to think about the experience and make sense of it in a new way. The entire class presumably experienced its teacher "taking the other side," yet only Robert put it together with perspective-taking and the context of the questions he was asked in the interview.

When Robert spoke about the need for "proof about what you're saying," he indicates possession of a more sophisticated grasp of the notion of historical evidence than we have seen before. At Level 1 and Level 2, only hints emerged of a conception (somewhat less developed) of this important element of historical thinking.

Ricky also noted that it is necessary to have information when taking another's perspective:

Do you think it's possible to imagine yourself in somebody else's position?

Yeah, it's very possible if you know, like if you study them in history or something, like President Lincoln. Like if you don't know anything about him, I think it's be pretty hard to say, "OK, I'm President Lincoln, I'm gonna do this and this, like that's what he did. So you have to kinda know a lot about the person, and then you just say your ideas, and then, well, you know what he was like, so then you know how to be like him. Like if it was some president who gave wonderful speeches, you could, if you said, "I'm gonna put myself in his shoes, and I'm a president who gives wonderful speeches," it would be more like him."

In these examples, Robert and Ricky display their sense that perspective-taking is actually a construction based on information and evidence. This more developed conception of

perspective-taking -- and the ability to articulate it -- signals an important difference between Robert's and Ricky's thinking and that of other students at Level 3. In other ways, Robert and Ricky do not display such highly developed thought. Some of the other students at Level 3 display their "top end" thinking in their responses to other questions.

While most of their examples are still primarily about themselves and their families, Level 3 students appear to be forming more developed, less concrete conceptions of perspective-taking. Their remarks about historical perspective-taking reveal a growing ability to think in progressively more abstract ways.

Level 3 Students' Historical Perspective-taking: Less Restricted to the Personal

The major differences between the thinking of Level 3 students and that of other students were in their historical perspective-taking. Some of the Level 3 students were actually beginning to be able to take an historical perspective; they were able to acknowledge the difference between putting *themselves* (and all their modern experiences and values) into a historical context and attempting to take the perspective of someone who actually lived "back then," someone who would not have experienced twentieth century socialization and education.

It would be an exaggeration to say that these students were taking historical perspective. However, most of them showed significant, initial signs of doing so. The examples below describe the tentative, inconsistent, even tenuous nature of these first steps into formal thought. In most cases, students showed only hints of "real" perspective-taking. The point is that these suggestions were well beyond the level of perspective-taking found at Levels 1 and 2, and can be seen as representing preliminary steps toward perspective-taking and formal thought.

For many Level 3 students, this interview may have been a chance to "try out" some of their new ideas about taking perspectives, hence their excitement. For most of the students at Level 3, it seemed a welcomed and comfortable opportunity to think out loud, and to enjoy some "higher level" conversation.

The inconsistencies in Level 3 students' responses to the interview should be viewed as evidence that these students were developing capacities for formal thought at the time of the study. That they were unable to maintain these levels of formal thought throughout the interview was not surprising. Their thinking was shown to be uneven and inconsistent in its sophistication and abstraction, sometimes revealing highly developed thought, other times very immature and concrete. This is consistent with developmental theory. The range of the Level 3 students'

thinking demonstrates the within-group variability present even within a small and homogeneous group. The more developed thought characterized by Level 3 must be seen as relative to the thinking of students at Level 1 and Level 2.

My first question about perspective-taking, in general, was asked at the beginning of the interview as the students looked at the diorama. Even as the interview began, Katie spontaneously brought up the idea of taking the perspective of someone from the past and did so several times during the interview. In fact, she took historical perspectives, or talked about historical perspective-taking, sometimes as part of an explanation or example, throughout the interview.

> I like it [learning history], and I'm glad I learn about it because I think it's important for me.
> *Why do you think it's important for you?*
> So I can tell my children, or just knowing what happened back then and like putting myself back then and seeing how I'd feel.

About taking the perspective of someone in history, specifically, she said,

> Well, I'm doing this report on Ann Hutchinson. . . I don't really think I could [put myself in her shoes] because that was a long time ago, but -- like I'm kind of like her in a way because I'm not really like bossy or strong, but I kind of believe what I believe in, even if like I might be threatened or something, I still kinda stand up for what I believe in. So I'm kinda like her. And um -- Rosa Parks is kind of like Ann Hutchinson, because she stands up for what she believes in. I think -- I'd like to be one of them people and do something like good for our country or laws or environment or whatever. But I think it'd be harder to jump into Harriet Tubmans' body than them because I haven't actually like helped a slave escape, I mean -- I think it'd be harder because she had to go through all those trails, and I've never like been in that kind of situation before. But Ann Hutchinson and Rosa Parks, I think, it would be easier. . .

Here is the importance of that "like kernel" of experience: beginning with a common characteristic or experience. Once again the question of identification is raised, and that while it is different than perspective-taking, it seems possibly a necessary step in its development. Although Katie's idea of perspective-taking appears to be tentative and in transition between concrete and abstract conceptualization, she appears able to stretch into the hypothetical range of thinking.

On the other hand, Paula appeared unable to take the perspective of a runaway slave, despite her strong interest in Harriet Tubman and the underground railroad; as she explained:

> When - well, the first time I started to hear a lot about the underground railroad and Harriet Tubman, and my eyes were just popping out my head. When the teacher explained it, I'd just keep raising my hand and asking questions, and that was really, really interesting.
> *Why do you think it interested you so much?*
> I thought that it was very tricky, and if they were caught, what they had to go through. . .
> *So, it sounds like there was something kinda intriguing about it . . . made you want to learn more about it?*
> Yeah. I just kept asking questions until there is nothing else, nothing else to learn.
> *What do you think it would have been like to have been a slave and run away and been on the underground railroad?*
> Unless I was one of the slaves that were beat a lot, I don't think I would have the courage to do it, because if I was caught, I'd hesitate when - and like if somebody tells me to duck, I'd just turn around and ask 'why?' instead of just doing that. So, I don't think I would have the courage.
> *You today, Paula, wouldn't have the courage. I wonder if . . . you were . . .*
> I mean I would have been the same person. Unless I was really - I know I probably would be having a bad time working for people and not even being paid or anything. But I don't think I . . . like, if somebody would tell me that, to put myself in somebody else's shoes, like a slave or something, I'd be like um - since I'm never gonna be one, there's no way I should be in somebody else's shoes.

Paula was among the more articulate and thoughtful students throughout her interview, yet she consistently displayed this inability to take another's point of view when it involved a transition in historical time. At another point in the research, when students were interviewed in groups, Paula again resisted taking the point of view of four different hypothetical historical personae who were created for the sake of the discussion: an African American slave, a white child of slaveowners, a white child of northerners, and a colonist during the time of the American Revolution. She said, "It is just too hard to imagine . . ." Although her language ability and content knowledge seemed to be at a higher level than many of the other students at Level 3, she was unable to "get out of herself" when asked to take a historical perspective.

When Paula referred to her last year's class's "living history" experience, in the example noted earlier, she was able to build on her concrete and personal experience, and seemed able to imagine what it would have been like to live like that; when the questions were hypothetical, however, she did not.

In her response to the question about perspective-taking in her daily life, Paula appeared to have a strong and concrete sense of what perspective-taking entails, describing her visits with her cousin's family, recently arrived from Kenya, and what it is like taking on "their ways." Here, her concept of perspective-taking is more like that of a Level 2 student, limited to taking on the behaviors of another. Paula's perspective-taking appears less well developed than other aspects of her historical thinking, again exemplifying the unevenness of development and the difficulty of perspective-taking.

Eva was at first reluctant or unable to talk about putting herself in another's place. After one question, *What would it have been like if you were a girl in those days?*, finally engaged her, she became more involved, using her imagination and evidencing "imaginative reconstruction." In this example, Eva appears to draw from an event that takes place in the historical novel, My Brother Sam is Dead (Collier & Collier, 1974):

> It would have been like from a totally different perspective because it would be a lot realer to a girl, not someone thinking about how it would be now.
> *So how do you think it would be different?*

> Well, I was just thinking it might be weird or scary, or whatever, having someone like being blown up outside your door. It would probably be like. It would be a lot more scary if like it *happened* to you, not just think about that happening. You'd think about it more 'cuz, 'cuz it happened. You didn't just think it. You just think it could have happened, but it actually happened.
>
> *What sorts of things would you have to think about?*
>
> You'd have to like think about who that person was and like if that happened to someone you knew or if it happened to you or like how you're going to clean it up, or whatever.
>
> *So if you were a ten-year-old girl with all this going on around you, what do you think you would have thought?*
>
> I would have thought it was kinda strange because - eerie almost because like that person right outside your door, and it's like you don't know what to do with it, you don't know how to tell the family, like their dad and all that.

Eva was able to distinguish between taking the perspective of a person who "really" lived back then and having her own perspective when thinking about what it would have been like. It is arguable that Eva's reading of historical fiction enabled her to imagine the scene and what it would be like to have been there; but only after she was asked to take the perspective of "a girl in those days" was she able to take those steps into the past.

When Robert was asked if he had been able to take the perspective of anyone in history whom he'd learned about, he said he really cared about what happened to the Native Americans in the northeastern United States; he could see things from their point of view. In Robert's response below we see, first, the linkage between caring and perspective-taking, and then we are treated to glimpses of "real" historical perspective-taking:

> . . . 'cuz they just got pushed away . . . I feel sorry for that, that they were just wiped out.

He went on to give reasons why it must have been so hard for the Indians to understand what was going on, including the differences between the Native Americans' and Europeans' religions and weapons. Here is what Robert said the Indians might have thought:

> 'Hey, we just want to make peace, we're just trying to help you guys, but now you're pushing us off our land.'
> *What if you lived back then? What do you think it would have been like?*
> Well, I'm kind of against the colonial people who hated Indians, so if I was back there, I would just try and help. I would have, like, written letters . . . and traveled around and maybe tell, try to convince people that what they were doing was bad.
> *Now, you said if you were you, that's you today. Now, what if you were a boy who lived back then? What do you think you would do?*
> Well, that's the kind of thing. - most people back then didn't have respect for the Indians. If I did live back then, and I was a boy, I probably wouldn't have -- wouldn't really have cared, well, couldn't do anything about it. . . and it kind of depends on what the parents told me or what they said was right and what they said was wrong, all the people who were important in the town, what they said.
> *And what sorts of things do you think they said about the Indians?*
> It's our land, we claimed it, they can just go find another place to live.
> *And you think that if you were a boy living back then, that you would have just gone along with it?*
> Yeah.

Robert was the only student who appeared to take an historical perspective at this level, in the interview. He held on to his subjective perspective while taking the perspective of someone living in another time and place *on that person's own terms and within the historical context.* Eva's remark, "It wouldn't be old-fashioned back then," is similar, but since she didn't elaborate, there is no way of knowing the extent to which she can take perspective within a historical context.

What were the variables that were working for Robert and other Level 3 students that enabled them to reach farther into minds of people of the past, to see through their eyes, to

imagine their experiences more completely than the other students were able to do? In the next section, I shall discuss the patterns of perspective-taking that emerged in the interviews, across the levels, drawing on developmental constructivist theory and research in history education in my attempt to interpret the data.

Discussion: A Developmental View of Historical Thinking

This author's interpretation of the research data suggests that children in the upper elementary grades -- at roughly nine through twelve years of age -- can and do engage in historical thinking, including historical perspective-taking, some of the time. This perspective-taking is seen within the context of a developmental perspective on learning and thinking. That is, children can and do take perspective in the ways that are appropriate for their level of thinking. In this model, even while children are in concrete operations they are working on the development of higher order thinking and often, if inconsistently, display characteristics of thinking at the next level.

What does this mean in the context of children's learning in history? By analogy, we say that a one year old can "walk" even when she falls every few steps, and a two year old "talks" when she has begun to use words to communicate. When the child uses three word sentences, we claim that she is well on her way, though her "speech" is far from the speech of a five, seven or nine year old. The speech of such a young child is rarely compared to that of a college student, or a professor of English. By the same token, the historical thinking displayed by a ten year old cannot be expected to approximate the thinking of a high school history teacher, or a professor of history. Just as it would be foolish to expect or require a baby to progress directly from crawling to running, or from babbling to speaking in sentences, we must expect that children will learn to take historical perspectives through a pattern of development, as when learning any new skill.

As a baby's first words are the building blocks of later fluency, the restrictions and limitations of children's historical thought, including their misconceptions, should be seen as the basis of more developed thinking in history. Remembering that children's misconceptions can be viewed as partially correct forms of understanding and that the thinking leading to these misconceptions may be necessary to the construction of more complex and accurate historical understanding, we should be sure to emphasize what they *are doing* even as we observe and point out the limitations of their thinking.

Bob and other students at Level 1 can be seen to be *learning* to think and talk about history as a form of knowledge, as are all of the students, each at his or her own level. As educators, we learn from those misconceptions. When Level 1 students appear unable to understand something, their misconceptions and "mistakes" help us know what and how to teach. As such, these limitations should be viewed as evidence of students taking the essential early steps toward more sophisticated thought. Although they may be unable to do something "across the board," the data provide many examples of evidence that they can do it "a little" or that they are "working on it."

Once we have some answers to such basic questions as those concerning the nature of children's thought in history, we can begin matching history curriculum and instruction to children's ways of thinking in that domain. Expert-like formal thought in the domain of history may be the long-term goal; we will best reach it by remembering that children's thinking is qualitatively different from that of adults and by providing opportunities for students to build knowledge in ways that make sense and "work" for *them* as learners.

Curriculum guidelines and content standards have tended to be theoretical and academic, derived from expert formulations devised by historians and history teachers. These guidelines and standards used as "markers" of historical thought in past studies have been shown to be only partially satisfactory as the primary means for studying and assessing children's thinking in history. It may be useful, however, to refer to the "historian's elements of historical thinking" here.

Conclusions: Discoveries about Children's Historical Thinking

Operating on the principle that we learn best about children's thinking in history through thoughtful observation and analysis of what they show and tell us, I began the analysis process by looking closely at the transcripts and students' work, instead of attempting to measure their thinking against an adult formulation of historical thinking defined beforehand. The interview transcripts were coded for evidence of perspective-taking and for such operational definitions of empathy as the use of affective terms, projection, and identification. I was eventually able to use the analytical codes in the construction of a picture that had emerged from the research of "what was there." As noted above, other elements of historical thinking - explanation, evidence, chronology, narrative, etc. played an important role in determining the levels assigned to the students.

My interpretation and explanation of these data moved from close observation and discussion of the interview transcripts to deeper levels of analysis informed by relevant theory and research from the academic fields of developmental psychology, history, and education. The present research represents only a "tip of the iceberg" in beginning to answer questions about children's historical thought. The general patterns that emerged are identified: the thinking/feeling connection in historical thinking and making a personal connection through family, culture, and schooling. As noted earlier in the paper, elements of historical thinking explanation, evidence, chronology and narrative, played an important role in determining the Levels assigned to the students in this study. In this study, the focus was on ways that the affective aspects of students' thinking, of the "personal connection," appears to be associated with if not influence and support, the development of this historical thinking.

In a child's lived experience, social, moral, and cognitive development function together. Development in each of these domains is related to development in the other domains, but is not necessarily synchronic (Cowan, 1978). The necessary ingredients for this development to occur are neurological development (biological maturation), social environment and interaction, experience, and disequilibration. Disequilibration, it should be remembered, is the "itch" or "need to know" that fuels the process of inquiry and the pursuit of knowledge in order to reach the state of equilibrium again (Piaget, 1954/1981; Wadsworth, 1989).

What does it mean to "make a personal connection?" First, finding or making personal connections signals "beginning with where kids are," as mentioned above. Developmentally attuned teachers know that this generally requires connecting new experience and information to something the child has seen, done, or about which the child has had a thought or feeling. It means connecting to something internal, something that is already there: an understanding, idea, feeling or knowledge already in place. From the child's perspective, it means starting "inside" the self, from that which is already known or believed, and moving outward to new questions, thoughts, experiences, and eventually to new understandings. The interaction between what the child brings from "inside" and external experience or information encountered "outside" is germane to the learning process.

While we sometimes theorize about piquing children's interest with the unknown and the unfamiliar, it may often be too great a leap for young children: to jump directly into a learning task about something they have had little or no prior experience with. While some children may

connect in this way, most do not. Even when the connection appears to be "purely" intellectual curiosity, there is the probability that this curiosity is somehow linked to a prior experience.

Pedagogically, effective teaching accomplishes this by building a bridge between the "self," the familiar, concrete, personal experience and the new experience and knowledge. Put another way, the "point of entry" is where the personal, concrete experience and background knowledge, whatever it may be, meets with the new. This is what is meant by making a "personal connection."

For each person, the beginning point is likely to be different and at a different "level" so to speak, depending on the level of thinking achieved. Diverse points of entry "work" for different students. This is similar to "building on prior knowledge," a phrase well known to most educators. But "building on prior knowledge" refers to only part of the picture. The personal connection to which I refer goes beyond the essentially cognitive "prior knowledge," reaching a deeper and perhaps stronger affective component which resides in the personal or the self. Thus, interpretation of this study supports the view that the affective and cognitive domains are connected in the building of knowledge and historical perspectives .

In history, more than in most disciplines, new information is typically situated within a time, place and circumstance far removed from the learner's personal frame of reference, especially so with children. It is especially important for teachers to build a "bridge" to assist the learner in reaching back in time, to help him or her find a foothold or a way into new and sometimes challenging images or concepts.

For young children learning history, this bridge building must begin in the realm of the personal. What happens next in the learning process, including the depth and quality of the newly constructed knowledge, will depend on a variety of factors beyond the scope of this discussion. But one thing appears to be certain: without that personal connection and the intrinsic motivation it spurs, history instruction will tend to rely on memorization and recall instead of inquiry, and many students will be unengaged. Bringing history alive is more than a matter of teaching rich content alone; students' imaginations must be ignited through some form of appeal to the personal.

In history and social studies education where subject matter is essentially removed from students' everyday experience, we have come to understand that a personal connection may occur in many contexts and have multiple meanings: family, culture, subculture, background

knowledge, curiosity, familiarity, concrete or "real" experience and observations, or such contrived experiences as role-plays and simulations. It can also come through a vicarious or imaginative experience as from reading historical fiction or primary sources, viewing photographs, having such aesthetic experiences as listening to music, and viewing art.

"History is the story of ourselves," writes Russell Freedman, author of numerous history books for children (cited in Tunnell & Ammon, 1996, p. 215). When children see something of themselves in the past, when they can connect with some aspect of another's experience in the past, the doorway to learning history is opened. A teacher's first goal is to engage students, to get them involved. Good teachers know this, and do it in countless ways.

Educational importance

The findings of the study are valuable in two ways. First, they reveal a picture of student construction of historical understanding in a developmental constructivist framework. Second, they support the application of developmental constructivist approaches to the teaching of history and the social studies, most notably building on students' prior experience, knowledge, and inquiry, that is, promoting students' "real" questions through interaction with rich content and materials. A future paper will more completely illustrate examples in the data and implications of such findings as the value of teaching with primary sources, historical fiction, and historical inquiry methods that engage students in the construction of historical perspectives.

History education has long been viewed as a means for teaching citizenship, in part due to the intellectual nature of the discipline (Hertzberg,1981; Downey and Levstik, 1988; Thornton,1994). Active and thoughtful participation in a democratic society often requires exercising complex multidimensional thinking: to "see through the eyes of another" in the spheres of social, moral, and civic relations. Thus, developing perspective-taking and empathy has multiple purposes: to enable children to better understand the history they learn in school, and to develop their capacity to think critically and participate in a pluralistic and democratic society. The value of this study lies in the overarching importance of learning to see another's point of view in understanding the past as well as in dwelling in the present, and in coming to terms with our shared and diverse humanity.

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